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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 007793

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/POUNDS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS TAKE SHAPE AS  
NATIONAL OPPOSITION FRONT FORMED

Classified by ECPO Counselor John Desrocher for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

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Summary  
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11. (C) A presidential decree issued on October 10 specifies the dates for Egypt's forthcoming parliamentary elections, which will be held in three rounds in November and early December, following a rough geographical pattern. Meanwhile, a new "National Front" announced on October 8 brings together the most diverse array of opposition forces seen in Egypt's recent political history, including the Muslim Brotherhood, the Kifaya protest movement, and most of the significant opposition parties, with the pointed exception of Ayman Nour's Ghad Party. While bringing this eclectic collection together is itself an achievement, the challenge of keeping the group together, and acting in concert, for the next eight weeks will likely prove difficult if not impossible. End summary.

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Dates (Finally) Set  
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12. (SBU) Ending weeks of tentative information and speculation, a presidential decree issued late on October 10 sets the timetable for Egypt's forthcoming legislative elections. Elections for the People's Assembly, last held in 2000, will be staged in three rounds in November and early December.

-- The first round, on November 9, will cover Cairo and Giza, the Delta province of Manoufiya, the Upper Egypt provinces of Assiyut, Beni Swayf, and Minya, and the Western Desert provinces of Marsa Matrouh and New Valley. The tentative runoff date for the first round will be on November 15.

-- The second round, on November 20, will cover Alexandria and the Delta provinces of Behira, Ismailia, Port Said, Suez, Qalyubia, and Gharbia, as well as the upper Egypt provinces of Fayyoun and Qena. The runoff date is November 26.

-- The third round, on December 1, will cover the Delta provinces of Daqhaliya, Sharqiya, Kafr el-Sheikh, and Dumyat, North and South Sinai, the Red Sea province, and the Upper Egypt provinces of Sohag and Aswan. The runoff date is December 7.

13. (SBU) Runoffs were not uncommon in the 2000 parliamentary elections, as the law stipulates candidates must obtain an absolute majority in order to win.

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Opposition Forms a Unity Front  
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14. (C) Meanwhile, after months of haggling among a diverse group of opposition parties and political movements, former Prime Minister Aziz Sedky and Wafd Party President No'man Gom'a announced on October 8 the formation of a "National Front" that would ostensibly unify opposition forces, including both the banned Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and the Kefaya protest movement, against the ruling National Democratic Party. While the impact and durability of the front remains to be seen, its formation represents a breakthrough.

15. (C) For months, agreement was blocked by the stubborn opposition of the leftist Tagammu' Party to the inclusion of the MB within the front. The Tagammu' had alternatively proposed that Ayman Nour's Ghad Party be included in the front, but the suggestion was anathema to the Wafd's No'man Gom'a, who has long maintained a highly personal and public feud with Nour, dating back to Nour's previous membership in the Wafd. It is unclear how the Tagammu was ultimately persuaded to climb down, but we note that party Secretary-General Hussein Abdel Razek, rather than party

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President Rif'at Said, long an outspoken MB nemesis, appears

on the National Front press release. Ayman Nour's Ghad party has been pointedly excluded, a victory for Gom'a.

16. (U) The full roster of the National Front appears below:

Licensed political parties:

- Wafd
- Tagammu'
- Nasserist
- Labour

Unlicensed parties

- Wasat
- Tahaluf
- Karama

Other movements

- Kifaya
- The Muslim Brotherhood
- The "National Grouping" (Including former PM Aziz Sedky, tabloid publisher Mustafa Bakry, and academic Hasan Naf'a)

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Comment  
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17. (C) The National Front will face two formidable challenges. The first, and largest, will be keeping together such a broad coalition, representing many contradictory ideologies and comprising many large egos and uncompromising personalities, and getting this group to coordinate its message and activities. This challenge strikes us as seemingly insurmountable, and defections of at least some of the members seem inevitable. Second, even if the group does manage to maintain some degree of cohesion, it will still face an uphill battle in making an impact against the retooled and increasingly disciplined NDP juggernaut, now apparently firmly under the control of Gamal Mubarak and his band of ambitious young technocrats. End comment.

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